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Z. Isham, R. P. D.
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THE
SUBSTANCE
Of a Late
CONFERENCE.
WITH
M. S.

Concerning

1. The *Rudeness* of *Atheistical Discourse*.
2. The *Certainty* and *Eternity* of *Hell-Torments*.
3. The *Truth* and *Authority* of the *H. Scriptures*.

Published

(Pursuant to his *Majesties Injunctions*)

To Suppress

Atheism and Irreligion.

By WILLIAM ASSHETON D. D.
Rector of *Beckenham* in *Kent*.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Richard Wild* at the *Map* of the World
in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, 1690.



To the Illustrious His
Grace *James* Duke of
Ormond, &c. Chancel-
lor of the Universities
of *Oxford* and *Dublin*,
Knight of the most
Noble Order of the
Garter , One of the
Gentlemen of His *Ma-*
jesties Bed-Chamber.

May it please your Grace,

TO permit Your Obliged
Chaplain to publish this
following Treatise under
A 4 Your

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Your Grace's Name. The Design of which, in all humility, is, to vindicate the Great Majesty of Heaven, from the Malitious Reflections of a Blasphemous Tongue.

If the Person concerned in these Papers had not confessed, upon Demand, That there is a God I should then have judged, by

The Epistle Dedicatory.

by the rest of his Discourse, that he was a downright Atheist. And ought to have treated him as such, and not by the midler Name of Deist.

*But whether Deist or Atheist his Excursions were so extravagant, That I did once think to have returned him no Answer. It being neither prudent nor safe to
cast*

The Epistle Dedicatory.
cast Pearls before Swine.
*And perhaps such Bravoes
as these are best Answered
with Silence : Who deserve
a sharper Confutation then
can be given them from
the Pen. But when I re-
member'd the Advice of
SOLOMON ; Answer
a Fool according to his
Folly, lest he be wise
in his own Conceit. And
did likewise observe, how this
Hector*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Hector of Satan repeated his Rambles in the Neighbourhood of my Parish. And with what Scorn he treated my Profession, with a Come Parson convince me if you can. I then thought it my Duty, to magnify mine Office, by pleading the Cause of my Great Master, against the taunting Reproaches of this insulting Sennacherib.

If

The Epistle Dedicatory.

If what I have here writ may be in any measure useful to the Cause of Religion, I do chearfully Publish it under Your Grace's Patronage. And when I have first Declared ; That I perfectly hate Flattery ; And am either too Proud or too Honest to be guilty of such meanness ; I will then take the Freedom to tell the World, how
highly

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*highly I Honour Your
Grace's Worth and Ver-
tues. And what Satisfacti-
on it is to all true Lovers
of the House of O R-
M O N D to observe the
the Budding Hopes of Your
Grace's Greatness.*

*'Tis an Argument of a
truely great and generous
Mind, to bear Adversity
with Patience. And though
'tis much hoped, through
Gods*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Gods Blessing upon His Majesties Arms, Your Grace's Affairs will in a short time, be in a better Posture ; yet possibly few Persons, of Your Grace's Figure, would have born some Passages with such Decency as You have done.

*But when I remember the generous Examples of your Illustrious Grand-Father and Heroick Father, 'tis but what was expected from
Your*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*Your Grace. For Greatness
seems to be entailed upon Your
Family. And that Your
Grace may live, to equal
the Worth and Greatness of
Your Ancestors, is the Pray-
er of,*

My Lord,

Your Grace's Chaplain in all

Dutiful Observance

William Afsheton.

6 JU 62

T O
M. S.

S I R,

I Have just cause even as a
Christian, but much more
as a *Church-man*, to express
my Resentments against your
late Discourse. Those Atheisti-
cal Harangues against the Ma-
jesty of God and his Providence;
the Immortality of the Soul; Re-
wards and Punishments in another
World; particularly, against
the Certainty and Eternity of Hell
B Torments;

Torments ; were doubtless to be rejected with the highest Indignation. And I am so far from condemning my self, as guilty of an unnecessary Zeal in so doing ; that I rather judg it my Duty, to confirm and enlarge the *Admonitions* I then gave you.

I will not exasperate by a minute repetition of your extravagant Expressions (for indeed they are not fit to be repeated) but shall, in Charity to your self and others of your Complexion, desire you briefly to consider these *Two Things*.

I. The *Rudeness*. II. The *Danger* of such Discourses.

From

From the former of these Topics, let me advise you to polish your Conversation ; and to behave your self, at least as a *Gentleman*, if not as a *Christian*. For pray, Sir, consider ; How ungentile it is, to disturb innocent Mirth, and ingenious Society with such exasperating Digressions.

'Tis, you know, an unfortunate mistake to affront any Person in the presence of his Friend. And upon such intimation given (even out of respect to the Company) the most inveterate malice is usually silenc'd.

You will likewise acknowledge ; he must needs be a Man of a very cold Constitution, who can sit tame and unconcerned, whilst his *Prince*, his *Parent*, his *Patron* and *Benefactor* shall be reviled and aspersed.

If the *King* shall be Libelled and Reproached, his *Person* ridiculed, his *Title* disputed, his *Government* traduced as *Tyrannical* and *Unjust* : An honest, loyal Subject will not barely reprove such a railing *Shimei*, with a *Curse* not the *Lords Anointed*, but according to his *Allegiance*, he will bring the *Rebel* to a sharper *Account*.

A Dutiful *Child* will, beyond all Patience, be provoked ; to hear his *Father* treated as a Villain and a Rascal. And a faithful *Servant*, on such occasion, will equally be moved for the Credit of his *Master*.

Now is God only Friendless ? Is no Man think you concerned, for the Honour and Glory of so great a Majesty ? When Blasphemous Mouths shall revile his *Nature* ; Burlesque his *Laws* ; Despise his *Promises* ; Contemn his *Threatnings* ; Laugh at his *Terrors* ; Do you think such Enlargement as this, can be welcome or accepted in a Christian Society ? If you fancy that it will, let me then convince

you of your mistake, whilst I thus briefly inform you, what apprehensions we *Christians* have of Almighty God.

We Believe ; That there is One Supreme *Being*, not only infinitely *Great* and Powerful, but also infinitely *Good*, Benign and Gracious. That as he made all Things by his *Power*, so He governs them by his *Providence*. That he hath a more peculiar regard to his Creature *Man*, whom he hath endowed with Perfections beyond other *Beings*. That he hath not only provided all suitable Accommodations for *this* Life (in which we continually

tinually depend on his Care and Bounty) but also hath made us capable of a *better*. That when we *Die*, we do not perish as the *Brutes*, but have *Souls* immortal, which shall never cease to be. That he hath provided a Happiness for these *Souls* (yea and our *Bodies* also, which shall rise again and be united to them) infinitely beyond our present apprehensions. That unspeakable Joys are prepared for those that *love God*, *i. e.* who are obedient to his Commands. As for those who shall finally reject his Precepts, and stupidly follow their own brutish Inclinations, there is a sad Eterni-

ty expects them in the other World.

But our comfort is, God made us to be happy ; and if we are not so, it is certainly our own faults. For he shews us our Danger, and instructs us how to avoid it. He expostulates with us, *why we will Dye and Perish ?* And we may be confident, since God is Truth it self, he is very sincere in those Expostulations. And as the highest Evidence of all this, **H**e sent his Son into the World, not only to instruct us, and to be an Example of holy Life, but also to *Dye* for us, and to reconcile us to himself.

Now,

Now, He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also, freely give us all Things?

In Sum, God is the most Indulgent Father, the most bountiful Benefactor, and the surest Friend. He hath promised (and he is able to do it) to defend us in all Dangers; to relieve us in all our Wants; to direct us in all our Doubts. Finally, He will guide us by his Counsel here, And, if we follow his Conduct, will at last bring us to his Glory.

Such Apprehensions as these all good Christians have of God. From whence, pray, do you judg, how unpleasant it must

must be to Persons thus persuaded, to hear such an excellent Being *Despised*. So great a Majesty *Prophaned*; and such infinite Goodness *Abused*.

And therefore since Men are impatient to hear that *contemned*, which they value and admire; Or to be told that is *false*, which they firmly believe to be true: Do not turn Conversation into Brawls and Quarrels. At least be so modest as not to affront the common Sense of Mankind. But if you will not Worship God yourself, yet at least be so civil as not to *Laugh* at those that shall.

And

And that I may convince you, what little Cause there is to be so pleasant on such Occasions ; I must desire you further to consider, Not only the *Rudeness*, but also,

II. The *Danger* of such Discourses.

And here I may rationally suppose, you have so much Love for your self, that you dread the Thoughts of being Eternally miserable. And I appeal to your own Experience, if the serious Apprehension even of the Possibility, of such Torments, like *Belshazzar's* Hand upon the Wall, hath not loosned your *Foynts* ; perplext your Thoughts ,
and

and damp't your Pleasures?

And therefore, since a mistake in this matter is like to prove so fatal, you ought to be well assured what you do, and upon what Grounds you do proceed.

For it is not sufficient Security in this Case to affirm [*Perhaps there is no Life after this, And, 'Tis probable there is no Account to be given in another World. And you are not able to understand, how there should be such a Hell, such a Place of Torments, &c.*] I say, this is not sufficient. But if you will proceed with Reason, you must then further Demonstrate; That it is plainly impossible, and a flat Contradiction that

that such Things should be. Unless therefore you can prove this Proposition ; *It is impossible there should be any future Account ; Any Torments in another World,* you do not act upon Prudential Grounds, nor shew, your self Master of such exalted Reason, as you commonly pretend to.

'Tis a known Rule, which all Wise Men will observe, *Provide for the Worst.* And therefore though it should be granted to be highly *improbable*, Or (as you are pleased to Phrase it) *A very unlikely matter*, that there should be a *Hell*, or a State of such dismal Torments, yet unless you can further prove,
That

That it is utterly *Impossible*, you are obliged in *Prudence* to provide for the worst. Even to amend your Life, and to reform those Practices, which, if there be a *Hell*, will most certainly bring you thither.

I must confess you have a very difficult Task, whilst you attempt to prove a *Negative*. But if you will be trying of your skill, I'll shew you the Method in which you must proceed.

Whoever shall undertake so extravagant a Design as to prove there is no Hell, He must *First* consider those Grounds and Reasons, upon which all good Christians do believe

believe it, and he must then shew those Grounds to be *Impossible*, and to imply a Contradiction ; or else he trifles and deceives his own Soul.

Now if any one should ask me, Why I Believe a Hell ? [*Did I ever see any of that Infernal Region ? Did I ever converse with those Damned Spirits ? Did they ever tell me there is such a dismal Place ?*]

I Answer, No. But I therefore believe it, *Because God, who is infallibly True, hath plainly Declared it.* If it further shall be Demanded, [*How am I assured that God hath thus Declared ?*]

I Answer,

I Answer, Because the *Holy Scriptures* which contain the mind of God, and in which the surest Notices of another World are to be found ; I say, These *Scriptures* do in plain Terms inform me, That there is such a Hell, Therefore I Believe it.

So that this Truth, *There is a Hell, and the Torments of it are Eternal*, is proved and supported by these following Propositions.

1. God hath Revealed his Will to Mankind.

2. Those Books we call the *H. Scriptures* contain this Revelation of the Divine Will.

3. This

3. *This Truth, That there is a Hell and that the Torments of it are Eternal, is fully Revealed in these Holy Scriptures.*

4. *What God hath Revealed in these Holy Scriptures is Infallibly True.*

And consequently; Whoever will pretend to prove it Impossible, *That there is such a State of Eternal Torments*, He must make good these Propositions.

1. *That it is Impossible, that Almighty God should reveal his Will to Mankind.* Or else,

2. *If the Possibility of such Revelation shall be granted; he must then prove, That it is Impossible, that these Books we call*

the Scriptures should contain this Revelation of the Divine Will. Or,

3. *If both the former shall be acknowledg'd; He must then prove it Impossible, That such a Doctrine concerning the Eternity of Hell-Torments should be revealed in Scripture. Or else,*

4. *He must make it appear, That what God hath thus Revealed cannot possibly be True.*

As to the First;

D*ivine Revelation is so far from being Impossible, that it hath the highest Probabilities to support it.*

You

You have already granted,
There is a God. And I am sure,
 upon due Consideration you
 will further grant ; That God
 is a *Rational* Intellectual Being ;
 A free Agent, having Liberty
 of Choice to determine his
 own Actions. And conse-
 quently, what should hinder,
 but that such a God may com-
 municate his Designs and Inten-
 tions to Mankind ?

Men you know do frequent-
 ly discover, not only what they
 resolve at *present*, but also their
Apprehensions de futuro, what
 they purpose to perform here-
 after. And this Faculty is ac-
 knowledg'd a great perfection
 in human Nature, such as o-

ther Creatures are not capable
 c^t. Why then will you deny
 that Capacity to so excellent a
 Being as an infinite God, which
 yet you will grant to a limited
 and finite Creature ?

And this expostulation will
 appear the more rational, when
 I have further told you ; That
 if you deny the Possibility of
 Divine Revelation, you have
 then the Suffrage of all the
 World against you. All Na-
 tions and all Religions, *Jewish,*
Heathen, Mahumetan as well as
Christian do acknowledge and
 suppose it.

If still You can doubt of so
 clear a Truth, *Tully in his Books de*
Divinatione may then convince
 you.

you. His *Authority* I shall not urge (for the *Authority* of God himself is rejected by you) but it is his *Reason* only I desire you to observe.

SI sunt Dii, neque ante declarant hominibus quæ futura sunt : Aut non dilligunt homines : Aut quid eventurum sit ignorant : Aut existimant nihil interesse hominum scire quid futurum sit : Aut non censent esse suæ Majestatis præsignificare hominibus quæ sunt futura : Aut ea ne ipsi quidem Dii significare possunt. At neque non diligunt nos : Sunt enim benefici, generique hominum amici : Neque ignorant ea quæ ab ipsis constituta & designata sunt : Neque nostra nihil interest scire ea, que even-

tura sunt : Erimus enim cautiores si sciemus : Neque hoc alienum ducunt Majestate suâ : Nihil est enim beneficiâ præstantius ; Neque non possunt futura prænoscere : non igitur & sunt Dii, nec significant futura. V. Cicer : de Divin. Pag. 269. Edit. du Puis. Lut. 1565. Fol.

Thus that excellent Philosopher argues, in the Person of a Stoick. The Sense of whose words, I shall thus faithfully give you in this following Paraphrase.

‘ If there be a God, and yet
 ‘ this God doth not reveal his
 ‘ Will to Mankind : If he hath
 ‘ made no Discovery of a fu-
 ‘ ture State ; nor given us any
 ‘ notice

' notice of Rewards and Pu-
 ' nishments in another World,
 ' *Then*, Some of these follow-
 ' ing Particulars must be assert-
 ' ed by us. Either. 1st. That
 ' God hath no Love nor Con-
 ' cern for *Mankind*; Or else
 ' 2^{dly}. That God himself is
 ' ignorant of future Events;
 ' Or 3^{dly}. That God appre-
 ' hends it will be of no ad-
 ' vantage to us, to know what
 ' may possibly befall us: Or else,
 ' 4^{thly}. That it is a Diminu-
 ' tion of his *State* and *Majesty*,
 ' to Communicate his Intentions
 ' to *Mankind*. Or else *Lastly*,
 ' If there be a future State,
 ' *Then*, That God himself is
 ' not able to Declare it.

‘ But none of these Things
 ‘ can be affirmed.

‘ Not the *First* ; For God
 ‘ truly loves us, and is very in-
 ‘ dulent and beneficial to Man-
 ‘ kind. Nor *2dly* ; Can God
 ‘ be ignorant of future Events,
 ‘ because they are appointed
 ‘ and determined by him. Nor
 ‘ *3dly* ; Can it be pretended,
 ‘ that the notices of a future
 ‘ State will be of no advantage
 ‘ to us : Since this very appre-
 ‘ hension that we must render
 ‘ an Account of all our Acti-
 ‘ ons, will make us more cau-
 ‘ tious ; not to live at random ;
 ‘ but to take heed what we do.
 ‘ And therefore *4thly*. It is far
 ‘ from being repugnant to the
 ‘ Majesty

' Majesty of God to reveal his
 ' Intentions; since nothing is
 ' more generous then Bounty
 ' and doing Good. And *Lastly*,
 ' God is so far from being un-
 ' able to Declare future Events;
 ' that he could not be *God* un-
 ' less he did *fore-know* them.

From these *Premisses* I may
 very suitably conclude with
 the same *TULLY*. *Sunt autem*
Dii, significant ergo. There is
 a God, *Therefore* He hath re-
 vealed his Will to Mankind.

The Possibility of Divine
 Revelation, *in Thesi*, being thus
 established; let us next ex-
 amin, *in Hypothesi*, by what
Mediums you can pretend to
 evince,

Secondly;

Secondly ; That it is Impossible, That these Books we call the Scriptures should contain this Revelation of the Divine Will. Or, That the Doctrines therein expressed should proceed from God ; should be dictated by his Spirit, or Published by his Command.

Now there are but *Two* Ways, whereby the proof of such Impossibility can be attempted. Either,

1. It must appear, That the Contents of this Book are unworthy of such an excellent Author ; and that the matters therein contained, are inconsistent with that due Notion of God, which even natural Reason doth suggest ; Or else,

2. That

2. That the Penmen of these *Scriptures* were Persons of such slender Reputation, that we have no reason to believe them, though they tell us expressly they received this Book from God.

As to the *former* of these Pretences; *Tolle, Lege*. Take this Divine Book into your Hand; But do it without Prejudice. Read it with the same indifference you would peruse any other Author, and then resolve me. What Passage (either *Historical* or *Doctrinal*) can you find in this sacred Volume, which doth in the least contradict, either the *Holiness, Wisdom, Goodness, Justice, Truth*, or any other

other of the Divine Attributes ?
 If you affirm, that there is
 some such Passage, and that
 there are such Contradictions ;
 When you have first produced
 them, and told us what they
 are ; I shall then, through di-
 vine Assistance, endeavour your
 Satisfaction.

As to the 2^d, viz. *The Credit
 of the Penmen* ; The utmost that
 can be urged against their *Au-
 thority* is this. [That there being
 many Cheats and Impostors in the
 World, 'tis the Character of true
 Wisdom not to be over-credulous.
 And therefore though we read ex-
 pressly in the Bible, All Scripture
 is given by inspiration of God,
 And Holy Men of God spake,
 as

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost : Yet this (saith the Deist) is but the Testimony of Men in their own Cause : who are indeed to be admitted as very faithful Witnesses, if we may believe themselves, and must take their own Words.]

For the true State of the matter, according to his Sense is this. [The Writers of these Books to support their Credit, and to raise themselves a Name (as Mahomet from his Pigeon, and Numa Pompilius from his Egeria) have counterfeited a Divine Commission, and delivered their Message in the Name of the Lord.]

To

To which malicious Suggestion, I shall return this brief and, I hope, full Reply.

The highest Evidence of Divine Authority, is the Concurrence of Divine Power, i. e. The utmost assurance which can be given by any Person, that he acts by a Divine Commission, and that the Message he delivers was received from God: it is the working of such Miracles, in Confirmation of his Doctrine, as are beyond the Power of any natural Agent.

Now *Jesus of Nazareth*, the Author of the *Christian Faith*, most expressly assures us, That the Doctrines he deliver'd were received from God.

God. My Doctrine *Joh. 7. 16.*
 is not mine, but his *12. 49, 50.*
 that sent me. I have not spoken of my
 self, but the Father that sent me, he
 gave me a Commandment what I should
 say, and what I should speak. *What-*
soever I speak therefore even as the
Father said unto me, so I speak.

And because it might seem
 unreasonable, to believe him
 herein upon his own word ; he
 makes this plain

Concession. If I bear *Joh. 5. 31.*

Witness of my self, my

Witness is not true, i. e. If I only
 bear Witness of my self, my Wit-
 ness is not effective, or con-
 vincingly true. There *v. 32, 33,*
 is another that beareth *34, 36.*

Witness of me : Ye sent unto John,
 and

and he bare Witness unto the Truth.
 But I receive not Testimony from
 Man, i. e. only from Man. I
 have greater Witness then that
 of JOHN: For the WORKS
 which the Father hath given me to
 finish, the same WORKS that
 I do, bear Witness of me, that the
 Father hath sent me.

John 10.

24, 25.

And when the Jews
 came round about him,
 and said unto him, How long dost
 thou make us to doubt? If thou
 be the Christ, tell us plainly. JE-
 SUS answered them, I told you,
 and ye believed not: The
 WORKS that I do in my Fa-
 thers Name, they bear Witness
 of me.

What

What these Works are, the *Evangelists* have largely Recorded. Some of them are briefly repeated by our Lord himself, in his Answer to *Johns* Disciples. — The

Blind see, the lame Luk 7. 22.
walk, the Deaf hear,

the Dead are raised. By such miraculous Works as these, our *Blessed Saviour* doth justify his Commission, That he was the MESSIAS, *i. e.* that he was that Person who was sent from God ; to Publish, to Purchase, to effect the Salvation of Mankind.

These were the *Credentials* of this Heavenly *Agent* : The Divine Seal to his Commission,
D which

which made it *Authentick*.
Which unless he had produced,
he could not rationally have
challenged any acceptance
from the World.

Joh. 10. 37. If I do not the
WORKS of my Father
(i. e. Works only imputable
to Gods extraordinary Power)

Believe me not. If I
-- 15. 24. had not done among
them; the Works which
none other Man did, they (the incre-
dulous Jews) had not had Sin :
i. e. had not been culpable for
Unbelief. Intimating plainly ;
That if he had not con-
firmed his Doctrine with such
convincing Miracles, they were
not to be blamed, though they
did

did reject him as an Impostor.

But still you will say, [*The Question is de facto, How can I be assured that such Miracles were really done by him? Had I lived in those Days, and seen any of his Miracles, I should then have known how to have judged of them. But to tell me of Things done Sixteen Hundred Years ago, is not much to the purpose. There hath been Jugling and Colusion in other Cases; and for ought I know, there hath been in this.*]

To satisfy which trifling Scruple, give me leave with some freedom thus to express my self. That if Men will turn perfect Scepticks; and cause-

lessly suspect the Truth of all such Passages, as they did not actually *see* done with their own *Eyes*, or *hear* with their own *Ears*, they are not worthy of Conviction. And if this be your Temper, we must then *Turn you to Grass*, and there leave you. But if there is such a thing as *Fides historica*; or any assurance can be had of those Transactions, which are beyond and above our own Times, there may then be given as great evidence of these Miracles, as any matter of Fact is capable to admit. For, *These things were not done in a Corner*; but plainly and openly, and in the sight of many Witnesses;
and

and with such remarkable Circumstances, as might best expose them to the strictest Examination.

To omit many others, pray read the Stories of (a) *Fairus* Daughter, the (b) *Widows* Son of *Nain*, and of (c) *Lazarus*. The last of which (*viz Lazarus*) had been Dead *four Days*, and buried till he stank, and yet at the call of *Jesus* (although bound Hand and Foot with Grave-Cloths) he came forth, all the Multitude beholding.

This last Miracle was so eminently convincing, and did so startle the *Chief Priests* and

D 3 *Pharisees*;

Pharisees ; that they called
a Council upon it and said.

Joh. 11. 47, What do we ? for this
48.

*Man doth many Mira-
cles. If we let him thus alone, all
Men will believe on him.*

[All this, saith the Deist, were
evidently true, and must needs be
granted, if we had not just cause
to suspect your Proof. You tell
us indeed that JESUS did such
and such Miracles ; particularly,
That he raised the Dead. But
pray who are they that report these
Things ? were they not his own Dis-
ciples and Followers ? And have we
not great reason to suspect, they
might forge these Stories for the
Credit of their Master ?]

In Answer to which *Cavil* (because *Objections* are endless) we shall put the Matter upon this short Issue.

These Writers do tell us; That *Jesus* did not only raise others from the Dead; but also that he raised himself. Yea, further they acquaint us, That before he *Died*, he promised his Apostles that he would rise again. And moreover gave this also as a *Sign* to all the People, whereby they should know; That his *Doctrine* was true, and that he was sent from God. If therefore I can evidently prove to you, That *Jesus of Nazareth* did rise again from the Dead, and consequently; That the Pen-

D 4

men

men of the New-Testament did herein declare nothing but Truth; you will then have no reason to suspect their Fidelity in any other Instance.

Now in order to your Conviction (which is most heartily prayed for) I must desire you to grant me this *Postulatum. Viz.*

That the Resurrection of Jesus is Matter of Fact. And consequently can no otherwise be proved, then Matters of Fact use to be.

When we design to convince another that such a Thing was Done, the surest Evidence we can give him, is the *Testimony* of sufficient credible Witnesses who saw it done. And he who is not satisfied with such a Proof,

Proof, we look upon him as a Person not fit to be Discoursed with.

Now there was never any Matter of Fact, better or more strongly attested, then the Truth of this Assertion ; *That Jesus rose from the Dead.* And that, Whether we consider the *Nature* of the Thing to be attested ; Or the *Number* and *Quality* of the *Witnesses* attesting.

First ; The thing to be attested was of that Nature, that it might be fully perceived by those who saw it ; *i. e.* It was an *Object* fit and proper to be judged of by their Senses.

As

Asto the Death and Passion of Jesus (the necessary *Antecedents* of his Resurrection) they were plain Objects of Sense : Done in the presence of the whole City of *Jerusalem*, and consequently of his greatest Adversaries. That he truly Died, all the World could testify. No Mans Death was ever more solemn or remarkable : Nor was this ever disputed. So that thus far we are fixt and certain ; That if *Jesus* did rise again ; his Resurrection was no *jugling Trick*, but a real Miracle.

After his *Resurrection* those to whom he appeared were frightned at it, supposing him
to

to be a *Spirit*. But he sufficiently assures them of the contrary by appealing to their Senses. *Be-* *Luk. 24. 39.*

hold my hands and my feet, that it is I my self. Handle me and see, for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones, as ye see me have. q. d. Satisfie your selves, that it is I the same who was Dead, that am now alive again. But,

Secondly; Not only the nature of the Thing (of which even our Senses are competent Judges) but also the Witnesses attesting do sufficiently prove; That Jesus is risen.

Now

Now there are *Two Things* must concur to make a credible Witness. *Knowledge* and *Integrity*.

1. *Knowledge*. No Man ought to be received as a fit Witness in any Matter, unless it do appear; that he had the opportunity fully to inform himself of the truth of that which he pretends to attest.

Should any Man affirm; That he *saw* a Thing done, or *heard* a Word spoken; and yet it shall be Deposed, by as credible Witnesses as himself, that he was at the same time *Twenty Miles* distant; Such *Evidence*, however confidently deliver'd, must needs be false and ridiculous. But

But now the Disciples of our Lord had all imaginable advantages, to know the Truth of what they Witness ; whilst they affirm ; *That Jesus is risen.*

They were his constant Followers and Attendants. And for the space of *Three Years*, were the daily Observers of his Conversation. And 'tis worthy your notice ; That when by the *Apostacy* of *Judas*, they wanted one of their Number ; they were very careful to choose such a one to succeed him, as had been a constant Follower of *Jesus*, and had taken exact notice of every thing they were to Witness.

Wherefore

Acts I. 21, *Wherefore* (saith St.
22, 23. **PETER**) of these

*Men which have compa-
nied with us, all the time that the Lord
Jesus went in and out among us, be-
ginning from the Baptism of John
unto that same Day, that he was
taken up from us, must one be or-
dained to be* **A WITNESS
WITH US OF HIS RE-
SURRECTION.**

Observe here how exact
they were in their Choice. They
would admit of none, but one
who had been with them from
first to last. That could speak
Things (as we phrase it) not by
Hearsay only, but of his own
knowledg : That if any Man
should ask him : Did you your
self

self See ? Or, Did you your self Hear, this, which you do report ? That he might then truly answer that he did ; and that what he Preached was upon his own certain Knowledg.

Now the Disciples of our Lord were the constant Hearers of his Doctrine ; and amongst other Passages they heard him exprefly Declare : That he would rise again the Third Day. *De- Joh. 2. 19, 21.*
stroy this Temple, and in three Days I will raise it up. But he spake of the Temple of his Body.
 And this Expression of rising the Third Day was so familiar, and so often repeated ; that
 the

the Chief Priests and Pharisees
took notice of it

Matt. 27.63. to Pilate, saying, Sir,
We remember that that

*Deceiver said, while he was yet
alive, after three Days I will rise
again.*

Moreover, The Disciples and
and Followers of our Lord,
were not only instructed in his
Life-time, that he would rise a-
gain; but they likewise saw
him after he was risen. And
in such a manner, with such Cir-
cumstances, as might most ef-
fectually command their Belief.

They saw him, not only once
or twice, but several times.
They saw him, not only singly
and a part, and in lesser Num-
bers;

bers ; but all of them, yea *Five Hundred* of them at once. And therefore though *One* or *Two* might perhaps be mistaken. yet so great a Number could not possibly be imposed on.

Especially, when we have consider'd further ; That they not only saw him, but had likewise all other imaginable Evidences to convince them.

For when he had appeared to them, and Discours'd with them, which might also be done by a *Spirit* ; to give them a certain proof that he was no *Spirit* ; *Handle me and see (i. e. observe and satisfy your selves) for a Spirit hath not Flesh and Bones as you see me have.* And least
E they

they might yet scruple, that it was not the same Jesus that was crucified, but some other Dead Body, which, being moved and actuated by an Angel, did take his shape and appear in his likeness: To remove this doubt; *Behold* (saith he) *my Hands and my Feet, that it is I my self.* Those Hands and Feet which were pierced with Nails, and fastned to the accursed Tree. And if you will not believe your *Eyes* (which, according to the Vulgar Notion, may have a Mist cast before them) then to satisfy your selves further, take the proof of another of your Senses. *Handle me and see.* And when
 St.

St. Thomas was a little more distrustful then the rest. *Reach hither* Job. 20. 27. *thy Finger; and behold my Hands, and reach hither thy Hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing.*

Now recollect the forementioned Passages, and then resolve me; What could have been further either said or done to convince them, *That Jesus was risen?* They saw him, he discoursed with them, did eat before them, they toucht him and handled him. And all this variety of Conversation they had with him, not only once or twice, but for the space of Forty Days together.

The Premisses considered, you must needs grant; That the *Apostles* were very sufficient Witnesses of our Blessed Saviours Resurrection in respect of their Knowledg. *i. e.* They had all imaginable advantages, to know the Truth of that which they witnessed and attested. But,

2^{ly}. Supposing their Knowledg; And that they had sufficient means of Information; yet whether were they Persons of that *Honesty* and *Integrity* as to be Believed? Or, was there not just reason to suspect, that they might deliver a Falsehood instead of Truth?

And

And for this, let me desire you to consider that known Saying, *Nemo gratis malus est.* There is scarce any Man so absurd, as to be a *Villain* for nothing. Or so impertinently Wicked, as to do mischief for mischiefs sake. Whoever therefore shall presume publicly and solemnly to deliver a False Testimony; he must be supposed to do it upon some urging Cause. As, To raise himself a Name: To please a Party; To advance his Fortunes: Or to gratify a Revenge.

Now, All that is I Joh. 2.16.
in the World (saith St. John) is the Lust of the Flesh,
the Lust of the Eye, and the

Pride of Life. And whatever the Apostles could propose to themselves, it will be comprehended under one of these Three. *Honours, Riches or Pleasures.*

1. As to *Honour*; They could not expect it, since all Dignities and Promotions were then in the hands of *Jews* or *Pagans*; from whom they received nothing but ignominy and reproach. And by whom they were accounted the *Dung of the Earth*, and the *Off-Scouring of the World*.

2. As

2. As to *Riches*. Instead of gaining an Estate, they were forced to part with all that they had. Either by a voluntary Resignation to supply the Wants of others (for at first, *they had all Things common*) or else by the fraud and rapine of their Oppressors. They no sooner came to *one City*, but they were Persecuted, and forced to *fly unto another*. And by this ambulatory Kind of Life, without any fixt certain *Being*, they were so far from being able (had they otherwise designed it) to have raised Estates and Fortunes; that they lived upon the Alms and Charity of others. And then,

E 4

3. What

3. What kind of Pleasures they were to expect, as their Master did foretel, so they themselves did sufficient-

Joh. 16. 33. ly experience. In the World ye shall

Luk. 21. 12, have Tribulation. They
16, 17. shall lay their Hands

on you, and persecute you, and ye shall be betrayed both by Parents and Brethren, and Kinsfolks and Friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to Death, and ye shall be hated of all Men

Joh. 16. 2. for my Names sake. Yea the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service.

St. Paul informs
us, That God had set 1 Cor. 4. 9.
forth the Apostles as appointed
unto Death, and exposed
them as Spectacles of Scorn and
obloquy to the World. According
to which it did in effect
happen to them.

Even to this present hour, V. 11.
we both hunger, and thirst,
and are naked, and are buffeted, and
have no certain dwelling Place;
being reviled we bless, being persecuted
we suffer it, being defamed
we intreat; we are made as the
filth of the World, and as the
Off-scouring of all things unto
this day.

In

In short. If Contumelies and Reproaches, if Racks and Prisons, if Flames and Gibbets, with other the most exquisite tormenting Deaths ; if these be *Pleasures*, then indeed the *Apostles* and Followers of our Lord, who witnessed his Resurrection, had their share of *Pleasures*.

And now Sir, having seriously Debated these Things, pray resolve me ; What just cause can be assigned, why Persons of sober rational Deportment (having the same Principle of *Self-preservation* with other Men) should, by Publishing *Christs Resurrection*, not only deprive themselves

themselves of all comfortable enjoyments, but also submit to the greatest Severities, and at last Death it self? I say, what cause can be assigned of such *Self-denyal*, if they had not the highest Convictions of the Truth of what they Publish-
ed?

But yet further. If the *Apostles* of our Lord were such Cheats and Impostors, why were they not discovered, and exposed as such? If the *Resurrection* of *JESUS* was no better then a Legendary Story, and a *cunningly devised Fable*, why was it not then confuted? The World at that time abounded
with

with Learned Men, both *Jews* and *Heathens*; who wanted neither *Wit* nor *Malice* for such an Undertaking. VVhy were not their *Pens* sharpned as well as their *Swords*? The Reason is evident. There were then such *Authentick Records* of these matters, as could not be Disputed. The

(a) Euseb. Hist.

L. 1. c. 9.

(b) Apol. 2. pag. 76.

(c) Apol. c. 5. p.

6, &c. and cap.

21. p. 23. V.

Euseb. Hist.

Eccl. L. 2. c. 2.

p. 40. V. Not.

Val.

(a) True ACTA

PILATI (to

which (b) *Justin*

Martyr, and (c) *Ter-*

tullian so successfull-

ly appealed) were

then extant, and

these were such ir-

refragable Proofs, that *Malice* it self was not able to *bis* against them. There

There was indeed a very early, though ridiculous, Attempt to stifle this Truth. The Chief Priests and Pharisees having heard him say, while he was yet alive, *After three Days, I will rise again* ; They not only Sealed up the Sepulchre, but also procured a Guard of Souldiers to watch it. That if any report were made of his Resurrection, they might then effectually disprove it by producing his *Body* ; which for that end, they had now got into their own Possession.

But observe the Malice of these Men ; not to be convinced ; no, not by a *Miracle*. For being told by the *Watch* (with
the

the greatest Consternation) that an *Angel* had appeared; that the *Stone* was rolled away; and the *Body* was gone: They then hired these Souldiers to report; *That his* Matth: 28. 13. *Disciples* came by Night and stole him away whilst they slept. VWhat! All of them slept? No *Sentinel* to watch for the rest? This was such an extravagant *Un-souldier-like* Allegation, that nothing but the Impudence of a *Jew*, could have imposed upon the VWorld.

From these *Premisses*, I hope it hath been competently proved.

1. That

1. That it is very possible,
*That God should Reveal his Will
to Mankind. And,*

2. It is no less possible ;
*that those Books we call the Scrip-
tures, should contain this Revela-
tion of the Divine Will. And
therefore,*

3. If (these Two Propositi-
ons being granted) you can still
be so extravagant as to affirm ;
*The Impossibility of Eternal Tor-
ments ; You must then prove it
IMPOSSIBLE ; That any
such Doctrine, concerning the Exi-
stence or Eternity of Hell-Torments
should be revealed in Scripture. Or
else,*

4. You

4. You must prove; That what God hath Revealed in Scripture cannot possibly be true.

As to this *Fourth* Proposition; I should but trifle to expostulate it with you. Truth being such an Essential Attribute of God, that it never was Disputed. If therefore God hath made this Revelation; There is a Hell, and the Torments of it are ETERNAL: Who art thou, O vain Man, that disputest against God? Let God be true, but every Man a Lyar. And then the only Proposition for me to confirm, and you to disprove is this; It is very possible that the Holy Scriptures do reveal this

this Doctrine, viz. That there is a Hell, and that the Torments of it are Eternal.

For if this be Impossible ; pray then inform us, what is the true sense and meaning of these following Words ?

(a) The Angels which (a) Jude. 6.
kept not their first Estate,
but left their own Habitation, he
hath reserved in Everlasting Chains
under darkness, unto the Judgment
of the great Day.

(b) When the Lord (b) 2 Thes. 1. 7,
Jesus shall be reveal- 8, 9.

ed from Heaven, with his mighty
Angels, in flaming Fire, taking
Vengeance on them that know not

God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall be punished with Everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the

(c) Joh. 5. 28, 29. Glory of his Power. (c) Marvel not at this :

for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the Graves shall hear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation.

(d) Dan. 12. 2. (d) And many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to Everlasting Life, and some to shame, and Everlasting Con-

(e) Math. 25. 41. tempt. (e) Then shall

shall he say unto them on the left
Hand ; Depart from me, ye cursed
into Everlasting Fire, prepared
for the Devil and his

Angels. (f) And (f) Math. 25.

these shall go away 46.
into Everlasting Punishment :

But the Righteous into

Life Eternal. (g) (g) Math. 13.

At the end of the 49, 50.

World, the Angels shall come forth,
and sever the Wicked from among
the just ; and shall cast them into
a Furnace of Fire ; there shall be
wailing and gnashing

of Teeth. (h) If thy (h) Mark 9.

hand offend thee, cut 43, 44.

it off : It is better for thee to enter
into life maimed, then having two
hands, to go into Hell, into the Fire

that never shall be quenched:
Where their Worm dieth not, and
the Fire is not quenched.

(i) Revel. 20. ed. (i) The Beast and
10. the False Prophet shall
be tormented day and night, for
ever and ever.

(k) Luk. 12. (k) Be not afraid of
4, 5. them that kill the
Body, and after that have no
more that they can do. But
I will forewarn you whom you
shall fear: Fear him, which after
be hath killed, hath Power to cast
into Hell; yea, I say unto you,
fear him.

And now Sir, having seri-
ously perused these Places of
Scripture, pray resolve me.
Are not these following
Truths

Truths as plainly therein delivered, as any words can express them ?

1. That wicked Men are liable to a further Punishment after Death. Those that kill the Body, are not able to kill the Soul. But God is able to destroy both Body and Soul in *Hell*, i. e. (as St. Luke interprets St. Mathew) to cast them into *Hell*.

2. This Punishment is very great and dreadful. 'Tis represented by *Fire* (the most smart and pungent Torment) and by *wailing* and *gnawing of Teeth*, out of Anguish and Despair.

3. *These Torments are Eternal. Everlasting Punishment. Everlasting Fire. Never shall be quenched. Their Worm dieth not.*

There are indeed some impertinent *Criticisms*, urged by the *Socinians* and others, to *enervate* these *Texts*. But what then? Was there ever any Truth so certain which hath not been Disputed :

But what if these *Criticks* are mistaken? What if wiser Men then *they* have thought otherwise? Pray then do not hazard an *Eternal Concern* upon such *Niceties*.

I did

I did once think to have expostulated these Things largely with you. And to have done it with all the warmth and vigour, that the Concern for a precious immortal Soul could dictate. But I must remember to whom I write. For unless your Judgment is rectified, the best things I can say will be but matter for your Sport. If the Word of God shall still be *Burlesqued*, and Ridiculed by you; I have no reason to expect any great Reverence should be shewed to mine. But I hope better Things, and Things that accompany Salvation though I thus speak.

(72)

God grant that you may in this
your Day, consider the Things that
belong to your Peace, before they
be hid from your Eyes.

6 JU 62

FINIS.



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